

The Grocer

Focus On: Lunchbox & Back to School

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FEATURE ONE: BACK TO SCHOOL

Since 2022, when veggie occasions in kids' lunchboxes rose more than 260%, much has changed. In 2024, chicken reigns supreme, and pizza and pasties are on the rise. Meanwhile, veg dishes are losing ground. They're down 33% in Kantar's data. So, what are the must-haves for kids' lunches? And what is driving them?

Less veg: Kids seem to be off the veg – bucking the trend for adult lunches. Why, after gaining popularity, are veggie lunches down? Are kids' lunches still embracing healthy eating? And is there a connection between kids' and adults' inverse preferences – are mum and dad eating the veg kids don't want?

Back to basics – and meat: Pizza, chicken and pasties are up substantially among kids' lunch options. Why are they enjoying such popularity? Is this being driven by retailers and brand innovation? Which kids' lunch products are selling well?

Pork on a roll: Pork, a less popular kids' lunch protein, is up more than 1,000% this year. What's behind the rise of pork? How do snacking sausages fit into the picture?

Sandwiches: Kids are eating more sandwiches than last year. But what are kids eating in their sarnies? Does the rise speak to a worsening of cafeteria food? Inflationary pressures? What are the most popular fillings?

Innovations: We will profile four new products or ranges, ideally ones that have not appeared in The Grocer before. We need launch date, rsp, and a hi-res picture of each.

FEATURE TWO: ADULT LUNCHESES

There's no doubt lunch as we know it has evolved. Sure, sandwiches are a staple, but increasingly, influences from other cultures are creeping in. Among adults, Asian flavours and curries are growing in popularity. Mexican is another top choice – if mostly among the over 55 set. Meanwhile, health is clearly a priority, with consumers seeking out lighter lunches with a bigger dose of fruit and veg. How have consumers' lunch preferences evolved since the pandemic and pre-pandemic days? Are they undergoing the same trends as kids' lunches? Where's the crossover – and how do they differ?

Asian trend: Across food categories, Brits are seeking out Asian food. This is also true of lunches. What types of Asian foods are consumers eating? Are these homemade leftovers, or predominantly ready to eat meals? Do they differ much from dinner fare? And is there a particular style of Asian food – noodles, curries – or country that's winning out? And how are retailers shaping their offerings to capture consumers' wants?

Vegetables: Adult lunchboxes have seen a 24% rise in vegetable meals year on year. Aside from Asian food, what types of food are behind the trend? Which veggies are best represented? And in which form do we eat them – are cut raw carrots, for instance, a thing of the past?

Sarnies: There's no mentioning lunch without talking about sandwiches. These remain by far the most popular lunch food. But what are Brits putting in their lunches? Has the makeup of a sandwich changed to be healthier, more veg-focused, or less processed?

Lunch sides: What are the preferred lunch sides and why? Crisps are doing well, despite the recent health emphasis. Chocolate bars and fruits have also enjoyed double digit growth. What's behind consumers' choices? And to what extent does the Meal Deal shape this?

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